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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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E. C. CROSS APPOINTED CHIEF, MUSEUM EXTENSION

The Royal Ontario Museum has just announced the appointment of Wing Commander E. C. Cross as Chief of the recently established Division of Museum Extension. With the growth of the educational activities of the Museum and a widening of its public relations, a Division to organize and extend several services was much needed. The founding of this new Division and the appointment of Mr. Cross as its Chief is a move on the part of the Trustees and Directors to make the Royal Ontario Museum more useful and province-wide in its scope.

Prior to enlistment in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Mr. Cross was Acting Curator of Mammals in the Museum. Thus he will return to the institution early in 1946 familiar with its history, work and development. He will bring to the Museum experience in organization and public relations gained as a staff officer in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and as Assistant Regional Director of Canadian Vocational Training for Ontario.

Mr. Cross, who is a member of the Toronto Writers' Club, has had some practice in journalism. He will assume editorship of the Museum's News Releases, which are regular and timely discussions of the Museum's activities, and interpretative accounts of its researches. As an experienced Museum worker Mr. Cross is familiar with the modern role and function of a Museum. Though a Museum is an archives for the safekeeping of valuable objects of science and culture, and a place for special research, it is pre-eminently an institution which teaches through visual means. With Mr. Cross in his new role the Royal Ontario Museum is better equipped to serve the citizens of the province at large.

TRAPPERS LEAVE FOR THE BUSH

Fur played a decisive role in the early history of our country. Trapping is still an important occupation in Canada, as an exhibit in the Royal Ontario Museum reminds urban dwellers. Right now the trappers are preparing for their active season and in the backwoods stores are ordering traps and ammunition, and flour, salt, tea and other staples.

Some trappers will return from their trap lines for a Christmas visit, but others will not come back to the settlement with their catch until after the spring break-up. Bales of furs will be sent from the local post to the large centres. Much of it, along with pelts from the fur farms, will help to swell our export trade.

RECORD SNAKE AT MUSEUM

The Royal Ontario Museum has on exhibit a living garter snake, which, to the best of our knowledge, is the largest example of the species ever to have been captured and measured. It is approximately fifty inches long. The largest previously known record size for the species was an Ohio specimen which measured forty-four inches in length.

From what little it known about the rate of growth of garter snakes under wild conditions, it would appear that this snake must be about eighteen years old. It was captured by Mr. Sprague Troyer, at Oakridges, Ontario, on October 6th, 1945.

SCIENTISTS MAP THE OCEAN FLOOR

The polar regions and the high mountains have been explored. Another "unknown land"—the bottom of the sea—is being surveyed, according to geologists of the Royal Ontario Museum. With a modern sonic sounder the depth of the water can be measured while a ship is proceeding on its course and the position of the ship can be accurately plotted from radio signals. Maps can be made like the topographic maps of land surfaces. Many strange features have come to light: great cliffs thousands of feet high; canyons exceeding in depth any on the continents, large mountains, and valleys that descend to a greater depth below the surface of the sea than Mt. Everest rises above sea level. The cliffs are sharp because of the lack of weathering away of the rocks and erosion by running water.

How were these deep canyons, that stretch out under the water beyond the mouths of all our large rivers, cut in in the sea floor? This is one of the toughest problems that geologists have to solve, because the only known agent is water running over land surfaces. How then can it be done? Either the oceans were withdrawn from large areas bordering the continents so that they became land over which rivers could run to the narrower oceans, or the continents were raised thousands of feet higher above sea level than they are now and large sections of the sea floor were added to the lands. Where could the water go in the first case? The uplift of the continents thousands of feet above where they are now, and within quite recent geological time, is an extraordinary thing to contemplate. Yet it must have happened.

PIPE SMOKING AN OLD CUSTOM IN ONTARIO

A shortage of tobacco would have caused as much concern three centuries ago for the Indians of Ontario, as it would for us to-day. The Indians used a great variety of pipes, as illustrated by the collections in the Royal Ontario Museum. Many of them are of baked clay. These run the gamut from very simple forms, resembling our cheap clay pipes, to elaborate moulded designs which represent squash-blossoms or tobacco-blossoms, or a strange face or creeping lizard. Still more cherished are the stone pipes, some of which bear intricate carved figures. In size they range from tiny miniatures to large, impressive ornate pieces. They vary, also, in details of construction. In some the stem and bowl are carved out of one block, in others the stem was a separate, wooden piece. The stemless pipes were usually suspended from a piece of cord which was worn around the neck of the owner. Absent-minded smokers of to-day might copy this idea to their advantage.

SEEING THE WORLD AT HOME

During the war many Canadians have lived in other countries. Any persons interested in studying the life and natural products of distant lands should visit the Royal Ontario Museum.